

REMARKS

OFFICE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

An Office Interview was conducted on October 20, 2005 and Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended during the interview. The following agreements were reached between the Applicants and the Examiner:

1. The rejection of claims 17-19 and 21-28 under 35 U.S.C. §101 because the claimed invention is alleged to be directed to non-statutory subject matter is overcome by amending the first recitation of each catalog database in a claim to read, in pertinent part, "an electronic catalog database stored on a computer" and by the cancellation of claims 27-28.

2. The rejection of claims 17-19 and 21-28 under 35 U.S.C. §112 as allegedly being indefinite is overcome by Applicants' response to Examiner's 35 U.S.C. 101 rejection, as discussed under paragraph 1 above, Applicants' amendments to Claims 17 and 19 recite how a procedure searches these electronic catalog databases, wherein each said electronic catalog database is stored on a computer. With regard to claims 27-28, the Applicants' cancellation of said claims renders moot this ground of rejection for said claims.

3. The rejection of Claims 17-19 and 21-28 under 35 U.S.C. §112 as indefinite for the use therein of the terms 'class relationships', 'attribute relationships', 'value relationships', and 'leaf class' and as a result of the Affidavit filed under 37 C.F.R §1.132 by Thomas McAlees stating that the present invention is directed to a relational database was discussed from several points of view.

First, Applicants pointed out that their use of the terms 'class(es)', 'classification', 'attribute' and 'hierarchical relationships among classes in a classification' is the ordinary dictionary-defined usage of these terms, e.g.,

Webster's Third International Dictionary defines class *inter alia* as:

"...a group set, or kind marked by common attributes or a common attribute..."

and defines a classification *inter alia* as:

"...the act or a method of distributing items into groups and classes and one of such classes is cit as a category..."

In addition, the claimed invention uses classes to group like-products in a catalog by category. Webster's Third International Dictionary defines a catalog *inter alia* as

"...a group of similar or related things often standing or succeeding in order ... a complete enumeration of items arranged systematically ... often alphabetically with descriptive details – see card catalog. ..."

The order being disclosed and claimed by Applicants was described during the Office Interview as a classification hierarchy and Applicants pointed out that nowhere in their disclosure is there any mention or even a suggestion of object, object-oriented technology, inheritance hierarchies, and the object data model. Examiner responded that the inheritance hierarchy is not required in an object model. If, this is the case then the use by Applicants of terms such as classes, classification, attributes and hierarchical relationships among classes in a classification should be the ordinary usage and meaning of these terms as pointed out above by Applicants, and not terminology of Object Oriented technology, because without an inheritance hierarchy to implicate Object Oriented technology and in the absence of any definition provided by Applicants, terms used thereby are to be given their ordinary meaning.

Second, Applicants pointed out that the relational database model is a data model that can be used to implement any data structure, including a classification hierarchy. In the Office Action the Examiner states "...a relational database stores information in tables consisting of rows (records) and columns (fields) ... and that nothing in the claim language suggests to one of ordinary skill in the art that the claimed databases store data in tables having rows and columns." The Examiner invited Applicants to provide references in the public literature that describe implementation of a hierarchy with a relational database.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the position that a database implemented using the relational model stores information in tables, and Applicants respectfully refer to a founding father of relational database technology, E. F. Codd, and enclose in this amendment (as Appendix A) a copy of "A Relational Model of Data for Large Shared Data Banks", published in Volume 13, Number 6 of the Communications of the ACM in June of 1970.

Codd's paper (Appendix A) presents the definition of a relation R on sets S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n (not necessarily distinct) as a set of n -tuples each of which has its first element from S_1 , its second element from S_2 , and so on. Or, more concisely, R is the Cartesian product $S_1 \times S_2 \times \dots \times S_n$.

Codd uses an array representation of relations for expository purposes only and states so at the bottom of column 1, page 379.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that contrary to the assertion by the Examiner, there is no requirement of a table for using a relational model. The table metaphor is just an expository aid for discussing and designing relations and their interrelationships for inclusion in a relational database. This table metaphor has been widely adopted but is not required by nor a part of the relational model itself.

The largest selling implementation of the relational database model in the world is Oracle, and Oracle has an associated query language called SQL*Plus. In the SQL*Plus User's Guide, Version 2.0, 1986-7, a chapter is included on how to implement tree-structured information (e.g., hierarchies) using a relational database, such as Oracle. A copy of this chapter of SQL*Plus is included in this amendment as Appendix B in response to the invitation by the Examiner to include such a reference.

The relational database is a highly efficient tool for implementation of class relationships, attribute relationships, and value relationships that affiant Thomas McAlees has cited since Mr. McAlees implemented a system according to the present invention using relational technology. In particular, Thomas McAlees is an expert in the use of Oracle to implement class and class relationships, attributes of classes and attribute relationships, and values of attributes and value relationships and leaf classes according to the present invention.

That is, as discussed in the Office Interview and reported above, the ordinary use by Applicants of the above cited terms does not require that Applicants be their own lexicographers, as alleged by the Examiner, and the paper by Codd and affidavit of Thomas McAlees support the use of the relational model (e.g., as implemented Oracle) without any reference to a table metaphor having rows and columns and overcomes this rejection.

Applicants respectfully submit that for all of the above reasons, this ground of rejection (3) under 35 U.S.C. §112 should be withdrawn.

TRAVERSAL OF CLAIM REJECTIONS

The claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §101 and §112 have been overcome as described above in the Office Interview Summary.

The claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103 are moot by the amendments to Claims 17 and 19, as well as the cancellation of Claims 27-28. The cited reference, Erikson, does not teach a third database, as now recited by Claim 17 and all remaining claims, which are dependent therefrom.

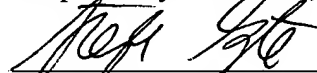
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing remarks, all stated grounds of objection and rejection in the Office Action have been overcome and this Application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

If any issues remain which may be best resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to kindly telephone the undersigned at the local, Washington D.C. telephone number listed below.

Date: November 28, 2005

Respectfully submitted,



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Enclosures:

Appendix A
Appendix B
Associate Power of Attorney
Petition for One Month Extension of time

NOW/SG

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